The Little Flowers of St. Alexander Sauli

I Fioretti di Sant'Alessandro Sauli

Poetic Moments of History and Spiritual Reality
Drawn from the Apostolic Process

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Rain

Months had passed without a drop of rain. Fearing for the harvest, the people of Cervicone begged Bishop Sauli to lead a procession to implore God for rain. After three days of fasting, the procession went from the Cathedral to the Church of St. Francis. There the Bishop began to chant the Litanies and other hymns. Soon the blue sky began to darken with clouds. At that moment, the Bishop cried out, 'Mercy!' and the people joined him. After the third cry, rain began to pour down so heavily that everyone had to remain in the church for three hours until the storm subsided. (Friar Sisto Negroni, p. 43)

The Maimed Healed

Bartholomew of Cervicone, treasurer of the Confraternity of the Holy Cross, had stolen some money belonging to the Confraternity. One day, while going fishing, he fell and was left crippled. Bishop Sauli met him and said, 'Oh, Bartholomew, you will never be healed unless you repay what you owe.' Wishing for healing, Bartholomew sold a portion of his chestnut grove, repaid the debt, went to confession, received Holy Communion, and asked for the Bishop’s blessing. From that day on, he improved steadily until he was

completely healed. 'I was an eyewitness to these events.' (James Alfonsi, p. 108)

The Half Bath

I once traveled with Bishop Sauli by carriage to St. Mary in Pertica, near Milan. We had to cross an irrigation canal called Carona. I warned the coachman to take a more northern crossing because the water was too deep. But, rushing carelessly, he drove straight into the water. The Bishop was soaked up to his knees; I managed to lift my feet and got wet only to my ankles. Angrily, I scolded the coachman. The Bishop, smiling, tried to calm me, saying we should take it as one of life's small joys—even though he was wetter than I was. (Severino Bellingeri, p. 111)

The Best Job

When I was still a cleric, I went to Pavia for the examination required for Holy Orders. Monsignor Sauli asked me, 'Why have you come to Pavia?' I replied, 'To follow holy obedience.' He answered, 'Blessed are you, for your task is better than mine—that of being a bishop.' (Fr. Giannambrogio Mazenta, p. 121)

Calming of a Storm

At the end of our audience with Pope Gregory XIII, Monsignor Sauli, Fr. Ambrose Ruottoli, Fr. Lawrence da Corte, Fr. Cesare Fei, and I set sail for Corsica from the port of Ripa on the Tiber. When we reached the island of Elba, a violent storm arose, and we all feared for our lives. Fr. Cesare Fei cried out, 'We are going to drown!' Monsignor replied, 'Now we are going to die!' 'Yes,' said Fr. Cesare, 'but not like this!' Then Monsignor Sauli raised his eyes to heaven, prayed, and made the Sign of the Cross over the sea. Immediately the wind died down, and we continued peacefully until we arrived safely in Bastia. (Peter Negri, pp. 61–62)

The Beneficent Hurricane

Twenty-two Turkish galleys were sailing toward Campoloro after devastating Sartone and Monticello. Panic spread among the people. They brought a horse to Bishop Sauli so that he could escape, but he refused, urging them to remain calm, assuring them that the Turks would not land. As they prayed together, a sudden hurricane arose. The strong wind prevented the galleys from approaching the shore, and they sailed away without causing any harm. (Palmerino Valle, p. 113)

The Parish Priest

Three farmers from Pavia, tenants on church lands, came to complain about their parish priest over interest rates. Monsignor Sauli welcomed them kindly but then admonished them for not acting properly toward their pastor. The farmers eventually admitted their fault and withdrew their complaint. Afterwards, the Bishop called the parish priest, corrected him, and warned him not to cause further problems. (Baldassarre Landini, p. 107)

Fishers of Coral

In Solensara, about sixty coral-fishing boats were attacked by the Turks. Each boat carried about ten men, who escaped by swimming to Cervicone. When Bishop Sauli heard the news, he gathered the fishermen in the church to console them, then welcomed them to his residence and said, 'My dear children, eat—this belongs to you, not to the Bishop.' The next day he provided them with bread and money for their journey home. I was sent by the Bishop to Bastia to prepare dinner and transportation for those who were not from Corsica. (Thomas Giorgi, p. 90)

Ecstasy

One Holy Week in Pavia, Canon Fabio Bottigella accompanied Bishop Sauli to the chapel of repose. The Bishop immersed himself in prayer. Three hours passed; he remained absorbed, unaware of time, even as the Cathedral filled with people waiting for the ceremony. Three times the Canon tugged at his cape, but the Bishop did not move. Finally, the Canon called loudly in his ear, 'Bishop, it is late—the people are waiting!' As if returning from another world, Bishop Sauli replied, 'Have we been here so long?' (Thomas Giorgi, p. 74)